

THE HUFFINGTON POST

7 Incredible Artists Who Lost Their Lives To HIV

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Their art lives on.



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Deputy Gay Voices Editor, The Huffington Post



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Courtesy of Visual AIDS

During the height of the AIDS epidemic, we lost millions of people on a global level. Today, Dec. 1, 2015, marks [World Aids Day](#) -- a time for us to reflect on those that we have lost, those who are thriving and the advances our society has made when it comes to the prevention and treatment of HIV.

We still have a lot of work left to do in order to eradicate AIDS and [HIV stigma is still alive and well](#), making it crucial that we honor the lives and work of those who died due to the disease. To that end, [POBA](#), which [describes itself as the "first virtual cultural arts center](#) to celebrate the enduring and transformative power of creativity by featuring works of deceased 20th and 21st century artists, launched

an exhibit today called "Art Lives" that elevates seven artists who died from AIDS, some well known and some obscure, in an effort to digitally preserve and honor their bodies of work.

POBA is also asking the public to nominate other outstanding artists that died of AIDS who they believe should also have their work showcased.



COURTESY OF VISUAL AIDS
The Fifth Day, Nicholas Moufarrege



COURTESY OF DEBRA ROBUSTO | STONEWORKS
Bloomingdale's Palm Beach, Jim Terrell

The Huffington Post chatted with Jennifer Cohen, Managing Director of Songmasters, which developed and operates POBA on behalf to the James Kirk Bernard Foundation, about the exhibit this week.

The Huffington Post: What is the overarching vision for this collection?

Jennifer Cohen: Where the Arts Live has launched the Art Lives initiative to help preserve and celebrate the creative legacies of a generation of artists in all media -- known and unknown, professional as well as amateur -- whose lives and work were cut short by AIDS. By highlighting a wide-range of talents who were nominated by DIFFA, Visual AIDS and LifeBEAT, POBA is also inviting other organizations and the public at large to participate in this celebration by nominating exceptional artists -- painters, photographers, dancers, designers, musicians and more -- they know who died of AIDS whose work they believe should be shared with others through displays on POBA. We will be accepting such nominations through February but all exhibits will have a permanent home on POBA.

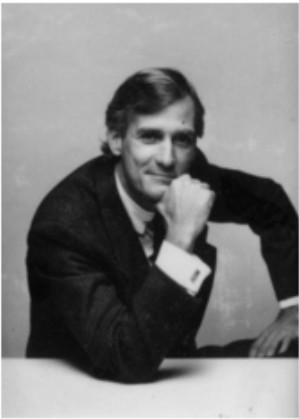


COURTESY PHILADELPHIA MUSEUM OF ART
Heart Strings Dress, Patrick Kelly

It will be the only online center actually featuring the creative work of those who have passed from AIDS and is completely open to the public for their discovery and enjoyment. These powerful creative voices may have passed away, but their creative legacies should live on. Art Lives is also meant to call attention to the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS and the efforts of our partner organizations who continue to offer direct help, counseling and education to another generation still susceptible to this disease.

Who are the individuals featured in this collection?

[Of] the seven inaugural artists who were nominated by our three initial partner organizations, each has a very unique creative voice and style. In some cases it took POBA months to track down family members and others who might have access to their works. The circuitous paths we were led on in our journey to find these people underscores why it is important to embark on this project now before leads to these artists' families and creative works becomes even harder to uncover.



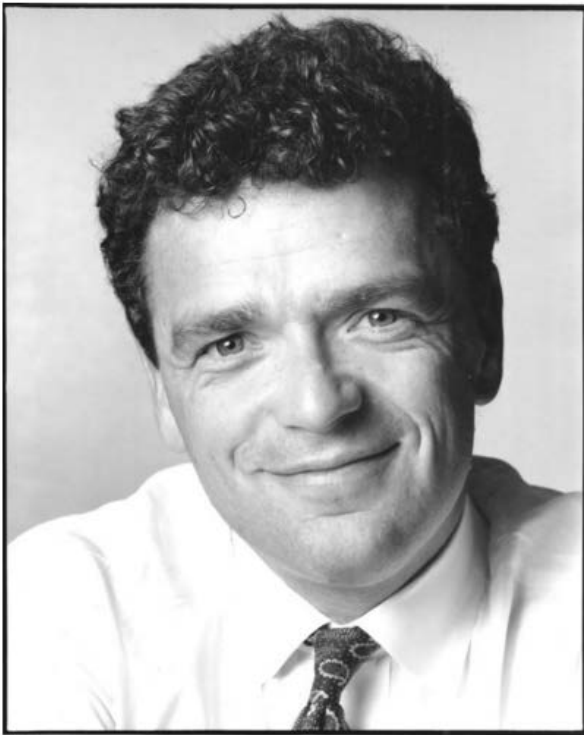
Art Lives

Jim Tyrell: One of the truly beautiful people of the NY scene of the 80s, he was an award winning architect and store designer. Pioneering the concept of the store as theater, his art is something that millions of people have experienced and benefitted from, but few know that a single artistic hand and vision is behind this experience. By way of only one example, he literally brought the experience of strolling down the Champs-Élysées to the main floor of Bloomingdales for new Yorkers of the last generation. In his exhibit, you will see his personal sketches as well as some of the origins award winning store designs.



Art Lives

Patrick Kelly -- One of the great women's fashion designers of his time. A young African-American born in the deep south, he took Paris by storm, not only because of the innovations of his designs but also due to his transformation of the runway into a "funway" of fancy and fashion. In his exhibits, we see his finished designs, his early sketches upon which some of them are based, and some of the original footage from his runways that were as much performance art as fashion events.



Ken Kendrick

A premier graphic artist whose independent work was responsible for a wide variety of key logos and designs embraced by a generation from the "Just Say No" drugs campaign to a redesign of Coca-Cola to the original Heartstrings logo. He also shaped the look of NY Times Sunday Magazine as its Art Director. On POBA, you can see exhibits of graphic work, his early cartoons and sketches, as well as his logos.



Courtesy of Concord Music, Inc.

Sylvester -- While he was ironically known by many as the "Queen of Disco," his talent really went well beyond that limited title. He had a truly amazing vocal gift, which is shown both through his recordings and some rare footage of his pre-solo days on exhibit at POBA. A revolutionary in his time as a gay man, out and proudly so to the media (we have some of his early TV appearances on POBA), it is hard to overstate how important his trailblazing path was to us all now living in this time of relative freedom of expression.



Art Lives

Mel Cheren -- A true giant in the music business, Mel may be best known for his role in creating the Paradise Garage, a mecca for nightlife and style in the disco era. He also founded West End Records and actually invented the 12 inch single, a staple of the music business and dance scene for years. He is also remembered as a major philanthropist. Few know, however, that he was also a gifted painter. POBA photographed some of these paintings, which are being displayed to the public for the first time.



Courtesy of Visual AIDS

Nicholas Moufarrage -- Integrated Lebanese, Egyptian, Parisian and American images and alphabets to create textile arts -- embroidered, painted artworks of exquisite beauty and complexity.



Courtesy of Visual AIDS

Martin Wong -- An amazing artist whose work blends the variety of his experiences and cultures that shaped his life. Originally from the west coast, he became a leader in the urban, east village art scene, mixing Chinese, Latino, graffiti and urban themes.



COURTESY OF DEBRA ROBUSTO | STONEWORKS
Field's Chicago Marshall Design Rendering, Jim Terrell

What do you want people to take away from this collection?

All of us involved in the Arts Live initiative hope that through the permanent displays we are creating together with the public a new generation of art lovers can experience these amazing works and feel first-hand that although the talents that created them may have passed away, their art lives on. *Check out some other art featured in the Art Lives collection below or [head here](#) for more from POBA.*



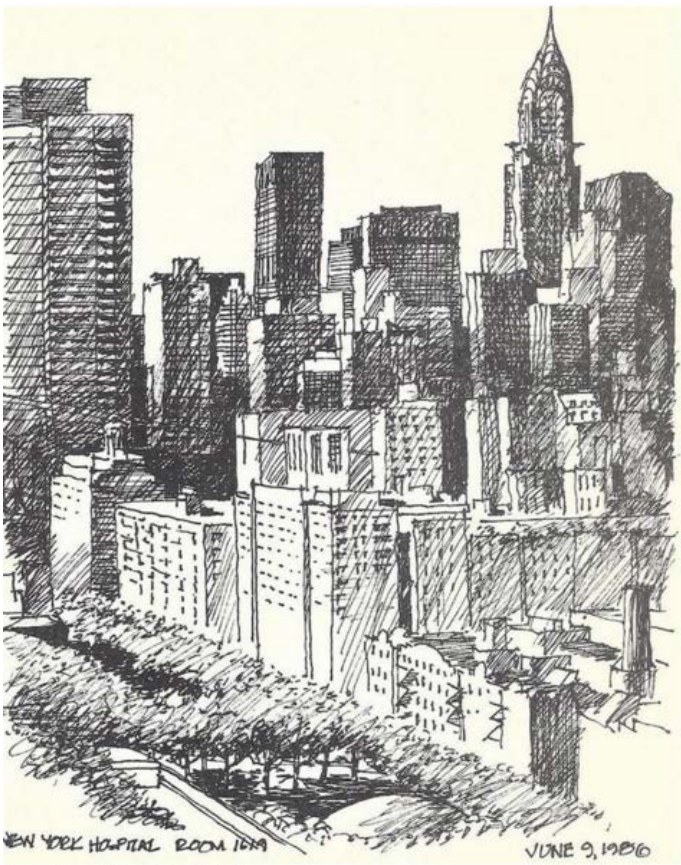
ART LIVES
Just Say No, Ken Kendrick



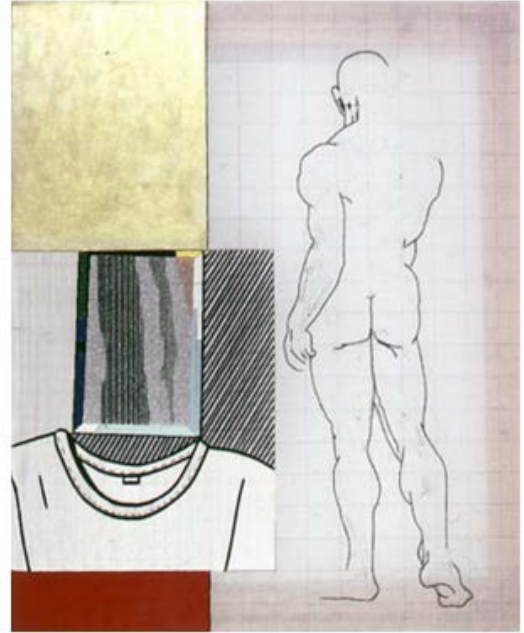
COURTESY OF COLONIAL HOUSE INN
Untitled 3, Mel Cheren



COURTESY OF VISUAL AIDS
Fireman, Martin Wong



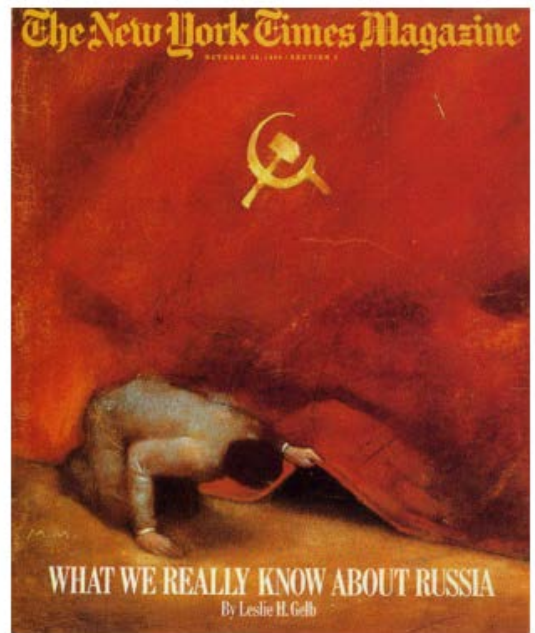
COURTESY OF DEBRA ROBUSTO | STONEWORKS
New York Hospital Room 1619, Jim Terrell



COURTESY OF VISUAL AIDS
Mirror, Nicholas Moufarrege



COURTESY OF VISUAL AIDS
Ms. Chinatown, Martin Wong



COURTESY OF AIGA
NY Times Magazine Cover, Oct. 28, 1984, Ken Kendrick